

Westborough Community Land Trust

2006 Annual Report



President's Letter



Young Environmental Leader Award 2006

For his enthusiasm, initiative, and dedication to improving the town's environment, the Westborough Community Land Trust is pleased to give its Young Environmental Leader Award to Westborough High School senior Zach Arnold.

Zach worked nearly a year with Westborough's Planning Board and Conservation Commission, helping to create a database of 196 field sites to document compliance with storm water regulations. Part of the Jobs for Bay State program, his project included compiling the first inventory of all detention basins and storm water catch basins in the commercial/industrial zones of Westborough, including photo documentation of their maintenance.

"I have a lot of respect for Zach. He has a very good work ethic," says Ted Brady, chair of the Conservation Commission. "I went into the field with him quite a bit and invited him to report on his work to the Conservation Commission. Zach did a marvelous job for us."

WCLT's Young Environmental Leader Award is given periodically to a young person in Westborough who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment and public service to the environment.



The Westborough Community Land Trust continues to thrive, both in land and human resources. We now have more than 350 members who contribute their expertise and enthusiasm in clearing trails, negotiating land acquisitions, leading programs, improving our environment, and joining hikes.

Through the dedicated efforts of our Acquisitions Committee, WCLT has preserved more than 128 acres of land. Of particular note this year was our first trail easement negotiated with a commercial entity, Otis Warehouse III, off Sassacus Drive. This easement is key to continuing the Charm Bracelet trail from Lake Hoccomocco across Otis Street.

Recent gifts of land add important links to the Charm Bracelet around Mill Pond. A gift from David and Amy Guzzi protects critical wetlands and wildlife habitat in Orchard Swamp, near the WCLT property behind the Haskell Fields. Through the generosity of landowners who share our vision, WCLT can continue its work as protector and steward of beautiful open areas in Westborough.

The 40-mile network of Charm Bracelet trails is created and maintained through the vigorous labor of our Stewardship Committee. Thanks to their commitment, more families than ever are taking to the woods to explore nature's treasures. As part of WCLT's responsible land management, our Stewardship Committee this year has surveyed WCLT property conditions, marked boundaries, and created land management plans. Included in these efforts was a professional Gilmore Pond Biological Survey to assess the health of that scenic pond.

Environmental education for all ages is the aim of the "WCLT Walks and Talks." From exploring Cedar Swamp to foraging for edible plants, families have found adventure on our guided walks through local woodlands. This year WCLT has reached out to young naturalists through "Reflections on Nature" with a Westborough Cultural Council Grant, as well as through our first Nature-thon and a Learn to Fish Clinic. In addition, the first WCLT Scholarship to a graduating senior recognized environmental sensitivity in a young adult.

People continue to learn about and join WCLT due to the energetic efforts of our Membership Chair, as well as the great work of our new webmasters, Rachel Radin and William Dupree. As ever, the fascinating "Nature Notes" newspaper column entices folks to discover natural beauties up close.

The Westborough Community Land Trust is fortunate to have talented and dedicated volunteers working to protect Westborough's natural heritage. We welcome all to join us.

Kris Allen, President



WCLT 2006 Committee Reports

Acquisitions Committee

The Acquisitions Committee continues to investigate and pursue easements and parcels of land that will help to achieve the overall goals of WCLT – to develop a system of walking trails throughout our community; to protect, enhance, and make available to the general public the natural biodiversity of this area; and to preserve the serenity and quiet atmosphere of the town as a balance to the vibrant and diverse growth we are experiencing.

This effort requires patience and persistence as we seek to have various property owners participate in these goals. For the most part, we have sought and received generous donations of land and easements from interested corporate and individual citizens. We are most grateful to them.

To be truly effective, however, WCLT must be able to raise the financial resources for acquiring easements, restrictions, and parcels. Such resources will ultimately enable us not only to acquire critical property interests by fairly compensating the owners, but also to be good stewards of these properties. We have come to appreciate the need to partner with land trusts in surrounding communities, as well as regional organizations, such as Sudbury Valley Trustees, and applicable State open space programs.

We have focused on parcels in the Suasco Watershed that protect the trail system there, especially in the area bordered by Otis, Milk, and Maynard Streets, and in Orchard Swamp between Lyman and East Main Streets north of Route 9. We are pleased to have acquired:

From Otis Warehouse III, Inc., a trail easement off Otis Street and Sassacus Drive as a part of the Charm Bracelet connecting with Hoccomocco Pond;

From David and Amy Guzzi of Southborough, 7.3 acres in Orchard Swamp with frontage on Lyman Street near Lake Chauncy, which provide wildlife corridors and habitat;

From Millie Coyne as well as Steve Munden and Ellen Gugel, two parcels of land which include an existing trail along the north shore of Mill Pond.

We welcome your suggestions, ideas, and participation in this process.

Tim Buckalew, Don Burn, Jon Nourse, Craig Richov,
Jim Tashjian, Randy Waterman

Education Committee

The Education Committee offered different perspectives on the environment in its series of family walks and talks. Hikes centered around the history of Cedar Swamp with archaeologist Michelle Gross, local glacial landforms with geologist Andy Koenigsberg, edible wild plants with forager Russ Cohen, and butterflies with Dolores Price of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club. Families enjoyed a winter woods trek in the Wile Forest with Doug Kimball of Mass Audubon and a spring migratory bird walk with biology professor Scott Shumway. Hikes led by WCLT members also explored Charm Bracelet trails around Gilmore Pond, Cedar Hill, and Fay Mountain.

To help safeguard our town's aquifers, WCLT sponsored a spring project with the Department of Public Works to stencil 125 storm drains with warnings not to dump waste into storm drains. This year WCLT's annual Earth Day Town-wide Clean-up rallied 45 hardy volunteers into three teams, including Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts, concerned residents, and neighborhood groups.

To introduce area educators to dynamic environmental lessons, WCLT sponsored a day-long Project WILD workshop. Schoolchildren also appreciated guidance from our Conservation Commissioners at the "Learn to Fish" Clinic at Sandra Pond. Both of these hands-on workshops were presented by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. WCLT's work in environmental education was enhanced with a grant from the Westborough Cultural Council to develop "Reflections on Nature" at Gibbons School.

Finally, the WCLT Scholarship was launched with the Earth Day Essay Contest. This \$500 scholarship is awarded to a Westborough High School senior with a winning essay on an environmental issue or significant natural area in Westborough.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of our nature educators, WCLT walks, programs, and community projects greatly strengthened the public's appreciation of Westborough's natural beauties.

Kris Allen, Chair

Susan Barnhart, Carol Britt Borglund, Allison Gergely,
Kathy LeBlanc, Leslie Leslie, Susan Lippitt, Barbara Muise,
Scott Shumway



WCLT 2006 Committee Reports

Membership Committee

Westborough Community Land Trust membership is open to anyone interested in protecting open space in Westborough. We welcome all residents from Westborough and surrounding towns who share a deep commitment to the environment and preservation of the town's natural resources.

Active members are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. The mission of the WCLT Membership Committee is to attract and maintain WCLT members while promoting and advocating for land preservation in Westborough.

In support of that role, the Committee is working to recruit new members through membership drives and public outreach. We encourage members to participate in WCLT sponsored events, such as trail walks, and to get involved in committees to support WCLT initiatives, such as Earth Day events and the storm drain Stenciling Project.

There are currently more than 245 memberships, including 380 individual members. Membership has grown by 12.5% over the past year, with 25 new members joining this year. Membership renewals, in June of each year, are a critical source of funds and human resources. We are pleased to report that members continue to provide financial support and increase their giving amounts. In addition, more than \$13,000 was raised through the Annual Appeal conducted at the end of the year. Special thanks to everyone who contributed throughout the year.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. Memberships will run through June 2007. The Annual Appeal will take place again in November to coincide with year-end giving. Thanks very much to all WCLT members and friends for their continued loyal support.

Maureen Johnson, Chair

Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee is responsible for the care of Westborough Community Land Trust properties. In addition, the Committee designs and maintains trails and develops infrastructure to encourage enjoyment of local open space.

With the expanding number of properties owned by WCLT, this year the Committee started a major effort of property improvement. We surveyed the current condition of the properties, added WCLT usage signs, put up boundary markers, and identified major projects for the tracts. Our first major project was to bring back the grassland area at WCLT's Valley View parcel. We had a study done of Gilmore Pond to stop the eutrophication there and are now investigating a long-term plan for landscaping and improving that area.

In the last year we created a policy for naming trails. We intend to create a similar policy for naming WCLT properties. The Committee will actively pursue signage to better identify the trails and properties.

On the Charm Bracelet we reconnected the Sudbury Valley Trustee's Cedar Hill Reservation with the SVT Sawink Farm Reservation, creating a new trail loop over Cedar Hill. The Charm Bracelet now has a seven-mile continuous section from Milk Street to Sawink Farm, as well as ten miles of continuous trail from Minuteman Park to the MBTA station. This year also saw the completion of the first major bridge on the trail, crossing Jackstraw Brook.

Our first annual WCLT Nature-thon was a special day of fun and prizes for the community, held at the Headwaters Conservation Area.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who continue to work on projects and maintain trails. Without their support, we could not do our work.

Don Burn, Chair

Mark Fox, Scott Henderson, Garry Kessler, Al Sanborn, Ken Slater, Sue Wells

Associate members: Kris Allen, Tim Buckalew, John Gareri, Barry Hall, Harry Newell, Ellen Bishop O'Brien